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VERSUS THE IRISH REPUBLICAN ARMY

by

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Operations Department.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

Signature RC Thackston

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reasons for Great Britain's failure to eliminate the insurgent IRA; the complexity of the Irish Conflict's origins, the exceptional political and military capabilities of the IRA, and last, Great Britain's inadequate system and methods for countering the IRA insurgency. This analysis of the Irish Conflict shows there is no purely military or para-military solution to counterinsurgency. Governments must recognize that successful counterinsurgency has the required focus which harmonizes all five instruments of power - political, economic, psychological, diplomatic and military, as well as the efforts of civilians, police and military.

Abstract of

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URBAN COUNTERINSURGENCY IN A DEMOCRACY: GREAT BRITAIN VERSUS THE IRISH REPUBLICAN ARMY

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

With the end of the Cold War, the United States, as the only remaining super power, faces increased responsibilities and potential for Low Intensity Conflict (LIC) involvement in other nations. As democracy takes hold in Eastern Europe and grows stronger in Latin America, the potential for United States involvement in counterinsurgent operations in a democratic country also increases. While volumes have been written about conducting counterinsurgency operations against rural or agrarian insurgents, relatively little has been published about such operations in urban areas, particularly in democratic countries. Greater emphasis must be placed upon counterinsurgency operations in an urban environment of democratic countries, including the United States.

The major purpose of this paper is to identify the operational focus that must be possessed by a civilian government and the military operational commander in countering and dealing with urban insurgency in a democracy. The required operational focus for successful counterinsurgency will be illustrated through examination and analysis of the current conflict between Great Britain and the Irish Republican Army (IRA), and identified as the result of this process, principles of counterinsurgency. To counter insurgencies successfully, a coordinated campaign which harmonizes economic, political, social, legal, public relations, civilian police and military efforts must be conducted. A coordinated campaign plan which follows the principles of "operational art" will ensure that each of these elements effectively reinforces the other.

The IRA has not restricted its operations to Northern Ireland. IRA terrorist actions are not uncommon in England, and several IRA members have been arrested in the United States on charges of illegally obtaining and attempting to export weapons and explosives.¹ The United States must deal with domestic insurgent terrorist groups as well. The book *Terrorist and Extremist Organizations in the United States* acknowledges over 30 such organizations which have "persevered and stood the test of time."² American civilian and military leaders must understand and be prepared for violent, tenacious, well supported terrorist insurgent organizations like the IRA.

This paper will (1) provide a theory for Britain's lack of success in countering the insurgent IRA, (2) recommend frameworks for analysis of insurgencies and counter-insurgencies, and (3) synopsise general lessons, concepts and theories in the form of principles that can be applied to urban counterinsurgency at the operational level.

The conflict in Northern Ireland provides an excellent case study, and can teach us much about what to expect from and how to counter urban insurgency and terrorism. It is a current conflict which has continued with little interruption for decades, and involves an urban insurgency struggle within a democratic society. Since 1968, over 3,000 people have been killed, about half by the IRA.³ To put this in perspective, a similar calamity in the United States, proportionate to its population, would result in over 440,000 deaths.⁴ While Britain refuses to officially recognize the IRA as anything other than a terrorist group, the IRA does, in fact, satisfy the definition of an urban insurgent. Colonel Dennis M. Drew, noted author and director of the Airpower Research Institute, defines an insurgency as "an armed revolution against the established political order."⁵

Recognizing that all insurgencies are unique should not detract from the lessons that can be learned and applied from a single insurgency. All insurgencies have general characteristics in common and tend to follow similar patterns. "The cause of the conflict is unique, but the methods are international."⁶

My thesis is that Britain's failure to eliminate the insurgent Irish Republican Army (IRA) is due to: (1) The complexity and nature of the Irish Conflict's origins (2) The exceptional strength of the IRA's political and military capabilities, and (3) The inadequacy of the British system and methods for countering the IRA insurgency. The IRA continues to operate and partially succeed in spite of operating in a small, island environment "under the noses" of Great Britain, a powerful and sophisticated first world country.

The term "IRA" in the context of this paper refers almost exclusively to the "Provisionals", the IRA violent military wing. It should be noted that there is also an IRA political wing (Sinn Fein), and an "Official" military wing, as well as other less well known organizations which purport to have the same goals. However, the focus of this paper is on the operations of the militant Provisionals, the wing whose primary means of achieving its goals is terrorism. Specific nomenclature to distinguish between the organizations will be used when necessary for clarity.

Chapter II reviews the settings and origins of the conflict in Northern Ireland, an understanding of which is necessary for a net assessment. Chapters III and IV of this paper provide a net assessment, an analysis of the major factors determining which side of the insurgency has the advantage and why. This includes an assessment of each side's strategy, and political and military capabilities and performance in support of their strategy. A framework for analysis of insurgencies and counterinsurgencies is also included. Chapter V provides principles drawn from this analysis that can be applied to counterinsurgency at the operational level. Finally, chapter VI offers conclusions regarding urban counterinsurgency operations in a democracy.

CHAPTER II

ORIGINS OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND CONFLICT

*"The Scots (originally Irish, but by now Scotch) were at this time inhabiting Ireland, having driven the Irish (Picts) out of Scotland; while the Picts (originally Scots) were now Irish and vice versa. It is essential to keep these distinctions clearly in mind (and verce visa)."*¹

The situation in Northern Ireland "is distinctive for its complexity and intractability."² The quote above helps to illustrate the complexity of the problem. An understanding of the current problems is not possible without at least a general understanding of the conflict's settings and origins. The conflict in Ireland are a direct result of, and in many ways a continuation of its history. To quote a cliché, "its past is present and prologue." Irish history is marked by three enduring themes. The first is that the people of the island have never shared a single national identity; second is that there has never been a consensus among all the people of Ireland to fully accept one legitimate government; and lastly that religion has divided rather than united the people of Ireland.³

Historians debate the date of the conflict's origin. Some argue the conflict began with the civil rights demonstrations in 1968. Others point to 1922 when the Irish Free State (now called the Republic of Ireland or Eire) was established, giving all but six counties (called Ulster or Northern Ireland) dominion status from England. Equally significant to the Irish conflict is the invasion of Northern Ireland by Sir Oliver Cromwell and his army in 1664. Still other historians could provide much evidence that the conflict began when Scottish Presbyterian and English Protestants established the "Ulster Plantation" in 1607, most of which later became the Northern Ireland of today. Certainly, each of these events helped to shape the language, law, religion, culture and politics of Ireland today.

The Irish problem is based upon much more than religious differences. In fact, the IRA contends that religion is not even an issue. According to Freedom Struggle, the Provisional IRA's manifesto, "Any man who claims to be a Republican and gets involved in sectarianism is denying the real meaning of Republicanism and has no place in our Movement."⁴ In addition to conflicting religious beliefs, there are many factors which continue to fuel today's conflict. They include nationalistic differences, the desire for independence from Great Britain, and retention and cultivation of Irish culture and language.

Ireland had its own culture, language, and kingship for more than four centuries before the foundation of an English monarchy. The Irish remained independent through Viking invasions during the eight, ninth, and tenth centuries. A successful invasion of Ireland by England in 1601 and the subsequent reign of Elizabeth I marked the beginning of foreign influence over Ireland.

Irish nationalistic and religious differences stem from the resettling of Scottish Presbyterians and English Protestants into Northern Ireland during the early sixteen hundreds (for simplicity, all non-Roman Catholic and non-Jewish religions will be termed Protestant henceforth). This resettlement distinguished Northern Ireland from the rest of Ireland. The Scots and English brought with them cultural and religious traits that further differentiated them from the native, Roman Catholic Irish. Many Catholic Irish were driven from their homeland to the agriculturally poorer lands in the south and west. Those who remained did so as tenant laborers rather than as owners. Consequently, the Protestants of Northern Ireland are separated from the rest of Ireland by race, custom, history, language, and economics as well as religion. This colony, the "Ulster Plantation" which is now referred to as Northern Ireland, remains closely aligned to the rest of Britain and is a Protestant stronghold in predominantly Catholic Ireland.

The native Irish struggle to retain its language, religion, and culture ensued. The Irish Catholics massacred many of the Protestant settlers in Ulster (Northern Ireland) during the civil war within England in 1664. After winning the civil war, Sir Oliver Cromwell and his army

retaliated for England and put down the Irish rebellion with similar ruthless violence towards the Irish Catholics. Anti-Catholic laws were not discontinued until 1685 when the Catholic King James II came to the English throne. In a few short years, the infamous William of Orange became King in place of the "too Catholic" James.⁵ The bitter battles between Irish Catholic supporters of James II and the English resulted in victory for the Protestant English in 1690. The battles endure as part of both Protestant and Catholic folklore. The current Irish conflict is not solely a continuum of the civil wars in England and Ireland. However, the memories of this period of violence and hate are kept alive by annual celebrations which fuel bitterness and division, exacerbating the conflict of today.⁶

The Protestant Orange Order was formed in 1795 to preserve Protestant political, social, and economic ascendancy.⁷ "Orangism" fostered religious hatred and intolerance, and more clearly distinguished the Protestants from the Catholics.

In 1800, England and Ireland were united by the Union with Ireland Act. The act also placed the Protestant minority in control of Northern Ireland.⁸ It was nearly 30 years before Catholics were allowed to become members of British Parliament and could press for independence from Britain. The minority Protestants, fearful of the consequences of losing control, supported union with the rest of Britain. The stage was being set for the twentieth-century conflict. Riots based on religious differences began to be common.

A handful of Irishmen, trying to force Home Rule for Ireland, led the Easter Uprising of 1916. Similar to the North Vietnamese TET Offensive in 1968, the insurgents attacked the cities, but failed to inspire the uprising of the populace that was required for military success. Although a tactical military failure, it was a political and strategic success as it made martyrs out of the leaders and turned much of Ireland against the British.⁹ The uprising also moved the Catholic Irish toward the rebel Sinn Fein (Gaelic for "ourselves alone") party, which sought independence for Ireland.¹⁰ Sinn Fein is recognized today as the "political arm" of the IRA.

An Irish Republic, led by Sinn Fein, was declared. Britain stepped in to regain control. In 1920, the IRA initiated an effective campaign of guerrilla warfare against British

operations.¹¹ Britain countered with moderate effectiveness using additional army force and a repressive irregular force known as the Black and Tans. When the smoke cleared, Ireland was given two parliaments subordinate to the one in Westminster, England - "one in Belfast for six of the nine counties of Ulster and one in Dublin for the rest of the country", thereby officially dividing Ireland into north and south.¹² By 1922, Northern Ireland was a province of the British Empire, and southern Ireland (the Irish Republic) was a reluctant dominion.

The root of Northern Ireland's present day problems lies in the drawing of the border between it and the Irish Republic. One-third of the population of Northern Ireland was, and is today, Catholic. Many members of these Catholic families, who were now part of the British Commonwealth, had fought and died for independence from Britain.

The Irish Republic broke completely from the British Commonwealth in 1948, and Northern Ireland was drawn even closer under the wing of the British. The British Parliament declared and affirmed "that in no event will Northern Ireland or any part thereof cease to be part of his Majesty's dominions and of the United Kingdom without the consent of the Parliament in Northern Ireland."¹³ With only one third of Northern Ireland Catholic, the consent of Parliament is not a likely event.

The years between 1922 and the late sixties were relatively peaceful.¹⁴ The violence which did occur was sporadic and isolated. The minority Catholics in Northern Ireland suffered from discriminatory measures which included manipulating electoral boundaries (gerrymandering) to ensure Protestant voting control, and injustices over hiring practices, housing allocations, and health care. Those who believed the solution was reunification with southern Ireland (primarily Catholics) were called "Nationalists". A minority of the Nationalists were in favor of reunification through force. These extremists continue to supply successive generations of volunteers to the IRA.

The Protestants, as a ruling majority in Northern Ireland, feared being a minority in a unified Ireland. Those persons (primarily Protestant) who believed Ireland should be a part of the United Kingdom, were Unionists. The Unionist extremists supported the violent and well-

armed Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) as a counter to the IRA. Britain was caught in the middle of a civil war between the Unionist backed UVF and Nationalist backed IRA. Britain had granted Northern Ireland independence in internal matters, and could not overrule the majority of the population who wanted to remain part of the United Kingdom. However, the British government's actions "suggested that in many ways it preferred an independent Ireland", and that "somehow the problem might just go away. It did not."¹⁵

The year 1968 saw an explosion of IRA violence that continues today in an irregular cycle of terror and deaths. The issues and grievances, stemming from numerous sources which span more than 400 years, have changed little. Their nature and entangled origins frustrate attempts at resolution. Northern Ireland's problems originate and revolve around religion, nationalistic origins, independence, discrimination, culture and language. The recent 1992 pre-Christmas bombings in Ireland and Great Britain are evidence that the IRA's struggle is far from over.

CHAPTER III

THE INSURGENT: A FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS BY THE OPERATIONAL COMMANDER

The IRA's political and military capabilities and performance continue to foil Britain's best efforts. An estimated 300 to 400 insurgents are tying down some 30,000 police and British Army troops.¹ Two important aspects contributing to the IRA's perseverance and ability virtually to strike when and where they please are: (1) The militant Provisional wing has the essential elements required for urban insurgent success, and (2) the moderate political wing (Sinn Fein) carries political power which generates support for their common cause, and it is officially separated from the Provisional wing.

IS IT AN INSURGENCY?

One of the first tasks facing the operational commander is determining whether he is facing an insurgency or some other form of low intensity conflict. The emphasis placed on the four instruments of power - political, economic, psychological, diplomatic, and military will be a function of the type of opponent one is up against. The primacy of politics and the supporting role of the military are paramount to successful counterinsurgency. Professor Waghelstein, resident counterinsurgency expert at the United States Naval War College, presents a formula for identifying an insurgency that is clear and easy to apply: Cause + Catalyst + Sponsor = Insurgency.²

The following analysis will show that by this formula the IRA is clearly an insurgency and cannot be restricted to the confines of the definition placed upon them by the British

government, which asserts the IRA is strictly a criminal terrorist organization. The IRA can be further defined as an urban insurgency. The Defense Research Corporation defines urban insurgency as "that patterned human behavior motivated primarily by a desire to overthrow the existing political structure or to replace the leaders occupying it, through the use of violence or its threat within the setting of urban life."³

A framework for identifying and analyzing urban insurgent organizations is provided below. I will concentrate on IRA operations from 1968 through today, as the late sixties were the start of the most recent crises in democratic Ireland, and the IRA during this period best represent a "typical" urban insurgent organization.

FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYZING AN INSURGENCY

By evaluating the variables of Professor Waghelstein's formula for an insurgency and additional essential elements, a framework can be developed for analyzing any insurgency. This framework provides a measure of insurgent political and military strengths and weaknesses, a kind of barometer that indicates potential for success and survivability of the insurgent organization. The framework, based on elements critical to insurgent success, includes cause and ideology, catalyst, sponsor, objective, strategy and tactics.⁴ The manner in which the insurgent plans, sequences, coordinates and sustains these elements in support of his operations define his operational art.

Cause and Ideology

A program which explains what is wrong with society and justifies its actions is critical to the insurgent. This is accomplished through the insurgent's ideology and cause, which

promise great improvement after it's political goals are achieved. Ideology and cause also provide useful information for the military analyst, possibly revealing much about the insurgent's goals, objectives, and strategy. The military commander must be familiar with this essential information before forming a strategy to counter the insurgent.

The IRA uses written and broadcast media to publish its ideology, as well as to generate support and threaten those who support the opposition (any form of British government including the most junior civil servant, and Unionist extremist groups). The IRA has even published a book Freedom Struggle which it claims is banned in all Ireland and is now re-published in America. The IRA's manifesto, "basically a case history dealing with British atrocities", also reveals IRA objectives and strategy, as well as justification of its actions for "improving society."⁵ Freedom Struggle stresses goals to reunify Ireland without regard to religion, to restore the Irish language and culture, and to end foreign rule. The IRA's "noble" pledge is to defend all Irish people regardless of religion against the "extreme Unionists and marauding British troops."⁶

Catalyst

The catalyst is the organization which articulates and creates the political movement. The catalyst for the IRA has changed form through the years, but remains strong. Organization of the IRA, like many insurgencies, is not easily defined. The IRA uses this confusion in organization as an operational and strategic tool, capitalizing on separation of its political and military wings. A strong organization can enable insurgents to compensate for material superiority of their opponents.⁷

The IRA grew out of the Irish volunteers who rebelled against British rule in 1916. Until late 1969, the IRA consisted of a political wing (Sinn Fein) and a single military wing. Primarily due to disputes over direct action and the use of terror tactics, the military wing split

into "Official" and "Provisional" armies. The less violent "Officials" continue to be directed by the Sinn Fein office in Dublin (Irish Republic). But the Sinn Fein political wing, even if it only claims to represent the Official army, has the same basic objectives and ideology as the Provisionals and therefore serves the Provisional's cause whether intentionally or not. In my opinion, substantial and crucial support (e.g., political, monetary, sanctuary) is provided to the Provisional IRA by Sinn Fein.

Separation of the political and military wings is an important aspect of the continued existence of the IRA. Few know for sure how interrelated the official and provisional groups are, but the official political wing has unequivocally aided the existence of the Provisionals; the question is only the degree and intent. Sinn Fein's refusal to condemn the terroristic measures employed by the Provisionals is a primary reason, in the eyes of many, for continued violence. London refuses to conduct peace talks with Sinn Fein unless the party renounces violence.⁸ The non-violent Sinn Fein political wing helps to legitimize the common IRA "glorious cause", provides access to political power, and encourages contributions and support which would not be forthcoming for a strictly military organization.

Organization of the two IRA military factions (Official and Provisional) is similar. In the classic urban insurgent style, all levels are organized in small cellular units for security. Organization and the military hierarchy is less structured, and policy less coherent than appears on paper. A single executive acts as "supreme authority" and has the responsibility of defining policy for the army. The executive appoints a seven person army council and chief of staff who represents the general headquarters (GHQ). Below GHQ are the brigades, which are organized into battalions representing the primary towns. Battalions are divided into companies, which are further divided into sections (the smallest unit in the IRA). Unlike regular army units, battalions, companies, and sections are of unequal sizes and strength. Organization and unit size are based on population, terrain, and mission. This flexibility of the organizational structure can be a great asset for the insurgent, but it can also be an asset for the counter-insurgent seeking to disrupt cohesiveness and unity.⁹ For example, cellular sections

which rarely operate together more than once, and which are led by people unfamiliar to them, are more susceptible to deception, propaganda, infiltration, and interruption of communications by the counterinsurgent.

Sponsor

Sponsorship can be defined as domestic and international support external to the insurgent organization. External support, "can accelerate events and influence the final outcome" by providing "political, psychological, and material resources."¹⁰ In the words of Mao Tse-Tung, "the richest source of power to wage a war lies in the masses of the people."¹¹

The IRA has generated strong popular support which provides money, food, shelter, refuge, transportation, medical aid, and intelligence. Popular support, or the perception, has also provided the IRA a sort of legitimacy that is particularly important to the survival and growth of insurgent and terrorist groups. "Without some support from the people, or at least their neutrality in the struggle (neutrality is a net benefit to the insurgent and is, in effect, passive support), the underground infrastructure would be quickly exposed and eliminated. (Similarly, Britain's) power also ultimately depends upon the support and loyalty of the general population."¹²

The IRA has used classic techniques of revolutionary warfare to build a strong base of support.¹³ They did this through propaganda, and personal persuasion coupled with intimidations. Intimidation methods include tar and feathering, "head jobs" (bullet in the brain) and "knee-capping" (bullets in legs or arms or both).¹⁴ Great Britain's less than stellar record in combatting the IRA also provides additional sustainment for the IRA cause. British brutal methods of interrogations, ambush assassinations by the Strategic Air Services (SAS; British anti-terrorist commando units), shooting of teenagers, and excessive use of emergency powers have mitigated the negative perception of IRA methods and alienated the populace.¹⁵

The British estimate that the IRA needs at least \$10 million annually to operate.¹⁶ The sources of money for the IRA (in approximate order of priority) include bank robberies in the north and south, extortion, tax exemption fraud, gaming machines, IRA-controlled businesses, and overseas sympathetic contributions.¹⁷ In the early seventies, Irish-Americans in the U.S. provided more than half of the IRA's budget through the fund raising organization NORAID (Northern Irish Aid).¹⁸ Although NORAID support has diminished to an estimated \$200 thousand dollars per year, the IRA still cleverly portrays the United States as their main supporter.¹⁹ The appearance of having the world's greatest democracy as their main supporter gives the IRA credibility and strengthens their propaganda campaign.²⁰ Americans still provide critical support to the IRA. Arms, including M-16 rifles, M-60 machine guns and surface-to-air missiles, have been intercepted by the FBI on their way from the U.S. to Ireland. A suspected IRA member was recently arrested for his involvement in smuggling anti-aircraft missile from the U.S. for use against British helicopters in Northern Ireland.²¹ There is much evidence to indicate that Libya has contributed arms, and that there is a strong connection between the IRA and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO).²² Many sources provide the IRA with the strong financial support it needs.

Sanctuary is key to the maintenance and growth of the insurgent organization. Sanctuary includes secure training, operational and logistical "bases", as well as safe houses for hiding from the British. Internal support for the IRA from the Northern Ireland populace is readily available. Most terrorist operations are performed in the nearly 300 mile long border area (bandit country) between Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic. The length, steep crags and narrow defiles of bandit country allow the IRA to easily slip across the border to the South for sanctuary. Although British military troops patrol portions of the border, fugitives from Northern Ireland cannot be pursued, and the Irish Republic refuses to practice extradition.²³

Objective

A well defined strategic objective is critical to cohesion of the insurgent organization. It provides a purpose and mission that, when combined with a motivating cause, will provide the insurgents inner strength and tenacity. The stated strategic objective of the IRA is clear and unambiguous; reunification of Ireland, restoration of the Irish language and culture to a position of strength, and complete independence of Ireland from the United Kingdom.²⁴ An undeclared but likely additional strategic goal is control and domination of Ireland. Like the strategic goals of other urban insurgents, the operational objectives of the IRA are essentially political.²⁵

The operational objectives of the IRA are to (1) render the British and Ulster governments essentially ineffective in Northern Ireland; (2) stretch the British government to the limits of its resources and weaken the British economy by sabotage operations against the government and commercial property; (3) obtain the support of critical segments of the domestic population; (4) focus world attention on the IRA cause with the hope of winning international support; and (5) increase domestic and international legitimacy at the expense of the British government.²⁶

Strategy and Tactics

The strategy of the IRA is to achieve their operational level objectives, and eventually their strategic objective, through three stages: (1) in the guise of defender of the Irish, organize and arm a "secret army"; (2) provoke the British security forces to overreact and alienate the populace; and (3) engage the British through unconventional warfare.²⁷ Tactics to support this strategy are based upon the use of armed force and propaganda. The following paragraphs will

examine the mixed results obtained by the IRA through bombing campaigns and terror, propaganda and use of the media.

Terroristic attacks on the British through ambushes, snipings, and bombings have achieved the desired result. These attacks make the military and police nervous and prone to overreact. The Derry Massacre, also known as Bloody Sunday, where thirteen civilians lost their lives, and numerous accidental and intentional shootings of civilians, including unarmed teenagers, are examples of British police and army lack of restraint.²⁸ Overreaction by the government further alienates the populace, and directly supports the IRA strategy. From the perspective of the insurgent, every dead police officer or soldier is a small victory, and every IRA member killed in return is another martyr for Ireland.

The IRA uses terrorism not only to increase the human and material cost to the British, but also to demonstrate its failure to maintain effective control and provide protection to Northern Ireland citizens. The IRA belief is that the British will grow tired of the struggle and seek to prevent further losses by either capitulating or negotiating a favorable settlement. The British do not appear to be growing tired, in spite of an estimated cost of six million dollars per day and the loss of over 3,000 lives (only 300 were IRA) in the 23 years since 1969.²⁹ However, the IRA, with its much lower costs and much greater potential gains, will maintain the advantage in protracted warfare.

Although terroristic methods attract worldwide attention to the insurgent's cause, they also can alienate even those persons originally sympathetic, especially if the terrorism is judged indiscriminate. The heinous assassination of Lord Mountbatten August 1979, which also killed or maimed members of his family, backfired on the IRA. Designed to focus media attention on "the Irish people's right of self defense", the bombing significantly reduced public support, including financial aid.³⁰ The assassination also prompted the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and other law enforcement agencies to bow to British pressure to move against IRA supporters in America.³¹ FBI measures have produced a "substantial decline in

arms procurement activities in the United States by Irish nationals" as well as a reduction in financial support from the U.S.³²

The Lord Mountbatten assassination is an example of the IRA's military operational objectives not supporting strategic objectives. In a conventional war, an occasional lapse of synchronization can be overcome. In an insurgency where support of the people is more critical to success, these lapses are magnified and can be fatal to obtaining the strategic objective. Indiscriminate terrorism has damaged, and if continued could even destroy, the IRA's political infrastructure.

The IRA propaganda machine publicizes, colors, and capitalizes on its own actions and those of the British. British house searches, arrest procedures, gerrymandering of voting districts, assassinations by the SAS, use of Army forces vice police, the "Special Powers Act", and perception of British support for Protestant para-military terrorist organizations inadvertently generate support for the IRA.

The media provides the IRA with free publicity, and unless controlled by the government, may act as a wedge to cause further division among people. Outrageous incidents sell newspapers, and publication of appearances of extreme measures by the British military or police forces such as the alleged execution style murders by British SAS anti-terrorist commando units, can turn critical support away from the counterinsurgent and to the insurgent. The IRA has effectively used legitimate radio and television broadcasts to request financial and arms support, threaten those who may oppose them, and distort the facts of incidents to further their cause. The IRA are proven experts at using informational power.

The IRA have achieved their operational level objectives. They have organized a secret army, and have succeeded in provoking the British security forces into excessive responses which have resulted in alienation of some of the populace. They also continue to engage the British in unconventional warfare in satisfaction of their third goal. But IRA terroristic tactics have also cost them critical support when judged indiscriminate, and the British are no nearer to leaving Northern Ireland than in 1969.

OPERATIONAL ART

The IRA's political and military strengths stem from the successful use of the elements that make up the proposed framework for analysis of an insurgency. The IRA appears to be practicing operational art for the insurgent. There is evidence of an over arching campaign plan for planning, sequencing, coordinating, and sustaining operations. Theatre strategy has been clearly translated into operations and ultimately tactical actions. The IRA follows and practices many of the principles of war, including objective, offensive, maneuver, surprise, security, and economy of force. However, like most urban insurgents who use the small cellular structure, the IRA is weaker in practicing the principles of mass and unity of effort. The IRA has correctly identified the Center of Gravity as the populace, but as discussed above, it has not always been successful in gaining support or even ensuring neutrality.

This framework indicates the IRA has potential for success against the economic and military power Great Britain. Slightly more than 300 IRA members are tying down 100 times as many police and British Army troops, the operating costs of the British are over 200 times that of the IRA, and the IRA shows no signs of weakening.

The government's determination, attitudes, capabilities, attunement to the grievances of the people, and ability to provide and act upon solutions which are acceptable to domestic and international society are also key to the success or failure of an insurgency. The following section examines the British response to the Irish Republican Army.

CHAPTER IV

THE COUNTERINSURGENT: A FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS BY THE OPERATIONAL COMMANDER

British failure to eliminate the IRA is not from lack of effort. There is no formula for counterinsurgency, and each insurgency is unique. Britain has made more than its share of mistakes, including not recognizing the most fundamental aspect of counterinsurgency - it is primarily a non-military action. Placing emphasis on military force and nearly ignoring the causes of the insurgency has been costly to Britain in terms of both lives and dollars. However, Britain has learned from her mistakes, and has significantly altered her approach to the Irish Conflict. An important point to remember is that even after decades of counterinsurgency by economically and militarily powerful Great Britain, the IRA continues to operate and may even expand its terroristic campaign.

To counter insurgencies successfully a coordinated campaign which harmonizes economic, political, social, legal, public relations, civilian, police and military efforts must be conducted. "A Guide to the Analysis of Insurgency" provides 14 military and non-military factors which should be used in analyzing a government's counterinsurgency capabilities and performance.¹ The 14 factors are: military - leadership, tactics and strategy, military intelligence, troop behavior and discipline, air and naval operations, civil-military relations, popular militia; non-military - police operations, civilian intelligence, psychological operations, unified management of counterinsurgency, political framework, improvements of rural conditions and administration, and legal reform.² Many of these factors will be used as part of the framework for examining Britain's response to the Irish Conflict. A coordinated campaign plan which follows the doctrines of "operational art" will ensure that each of these important elements effectively reinforces the others.

FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYZING THE COUNTERINSURGENT

The British are only recently beginning to follow what is essentially their own counterinsurgency doctrine as outlined in Sir Robert Thompson's 1966 book, *Defeating Communist Insurgency*. Failure to follow doctrine, Thompson's Five principles, is the root of Great Britain's failure to achieve success in the Northern Ireland Conflict. Thompson's Five Principles, and the 14 factors from above will be used as a framework to analyze British counterinsurgency efforts. The term "government" refers to those organizations, agencies and individuals who are involved in eliminating the insurgent/terrorist organizations.

Thompson's Five Principles of Counterinsurgency³

"The government must have a clear political aim: to establish and maintain a free, independent, and united country which is politically and economically stable and viable."

Sir Robert Thompson

This principle reiterates the time-honored maxim of winning "hearts and minds" of the people. It also stresses the need for political reform and economic development. A country will not be "politically and economically stable and viable" without support of the populace. Public opinion and support have ping-ponged back and forth from IRA to counterinsurgent. The IRA's stronger propaganda campaign, Irish public perception of an "occupying colonialist army", and much of Britain's counterinsurgent response have not helped the British cause.

The British Army's offensive in the early seventies produced military results, but it also polarized opinion in Northern Ireland and enabled the IRA and supporters to represent the army

as a repressive force. Using the leverage of asymmetrical power, the IRA countered British military power with informational and psychological power. In this sense, IRA terrorism succeeded. The British Army, initially a referee between Nationalists and Unionists, appeared to take sides and join the conflict. The subsequent chaos postponed social reforms designed to get at the root of the problem and eroded confidence in Britain's ability to develop acceptable solutions in a timely manner. With each perceived atrocity by the British government or its representatives, the IRA gains support from the people. To succeed, Great Britain must recognize it is fighting an asymmetrical war where the non-military pillars of power, political, economic and psychological, will be the most effective against the IRA.

The British government must make further efforts towards addressing the source of the problem. Clearly the British government cannot just solve the problem by granting Ireland independence. Great Britain's departure from Ireland without addressing the root causes would cause further unrest and could transfer the suffering from the Catholics to the Protestant minority, create an uprising by the Protestants to avenge atrocities of the IRA, and/or fuel an all out civil war.

Much could be done to mitigate Irish grievances short of complete independence from Britain. For example, Britain could reduce discrimination against Northern Ireland Catholics which continues in many forms - hiring practices, health care, housing, voting. Or similarly eliminate the practice of gerrymandering which ensures Unionists/Protestants control the vote even when they have only a minority representation. Simple recognition, and perhaps cultivation, of Gaelic culture and language in Ireland by Britain would regain some support from the people.

Additionally, Britain's refusal to conduct negotiations with the IRA's political arm suggests a lack of motivation to address the true political nature of the insurgency. The IRA's plea in Freedom Struggle reads: "Will talk achieve more than the gun? YES, DEFINITELY YES.....It is the British, not we, who still refuse to negotiate."⁴ Britain is making an effort, but it is the wrong type; her effort is military, and fails to recognize the primacy of politics.

"The government must function in accordance with the law."

Sir Robert Thompson

This principle underlines the requirement that the law must be applied equally to the government forces and the insurgents. Punishment must be directed at the guilty, not the general populace. The concept of minimum force is also implied. The British have much work to do in altering the perception that the British government too often fails to function within the law.

The British government did not appear to apply the law equally or exercise the concept of minimum force in the 1969 Nationalist parade described below, or on Bloody Sunday in 1972. The following more current actions indicate little progress has been made.

For example, the Army admitted to the use of "sophisticated disorientation techniques" during the early seventies, and the European Commission on Human Rights published a 1976 report charging Great Britain with the use of torture and "inhuman and degrading treatment" against suspected terrorists.⁵ These were not isolated events.

Additional incidents of failing to act within the law and using excessive force have continued to create an adversarial relationship between the police and populace. During a 1993 interview on the television show "60 Minutes", the current London Police Commissioner admitted to brutal arrests of suspected terrorists, severe and unorthodox interrogation methods, faking of evidence, and fabricated confessions.⁶ The recent 1992 release of the innocent "Guilford Four" after 15 years in prison led to weekly releases of persons who, according to the London Police Commissioner, never should have been imprisoned in the first place.⁷ Police credibility with jurors and rapport with citizens has decreased dramatically, along with their effectiveness.

Britain's excessive use of emergency legislation has benefitted the IRA by alienating the populace. Non-jury courts "with their conveyor-belt justice are a poison to this society."⁸ During the first six months of 1981, for example, 292 people were convicted of terrorists

crimes by non-jury courts. Many were sentenced to life imprisonment. Emergency legislation also permits police and soldiers to search private homes without warrants. Even the soldiers object to this procedure, as it only serves to "add another little stream to an ocean of bitterness and resentment."⁹ Additionally, any person suspected of terrorism can be arrested and held without warrant for 72 hours. Parliament debates the issue of emergency legislation every six months, and will eventually recognize the costs are exceeding the benefits.¹⁰ Emergency legislation, like force, must be used in a highly selective manner in counterinsurgent operations.

Operating in accordance with the law can undermine the insurgents popular support. According to Sir Robert Thompson, "adherence to the law by anti-terrorist forces is a great advantage as it puts the government in a position in which it is represented as a protector of those who are innocent, and it puts the terrorists in the position of criminals."¹¹

"The Government must have an overall plan in which political, social, economic and military responses are carefully laid down."

Sir Robert Thompson

Without an overall plan, each of the counterinsurgency political, psychological, diplomatic, economic, and military "pillars" and corresponding action agencies work independently, often at cross purposes. The result is not only inefficiencies, but inability to ensure the right pillar, or instrument of force, is used to the proper degree at the proper time. Counterinsurgency is primarily a political "war", but Britain's lack of an overall plan has contributed to over reliance on the military.

British decentralization has fostered poor inter-agency coordination. Intelligence and experience tend to get locked up in compartments. "Efforts have been hampered by the lack of cooperation between politicians, army and police, each interpreting his or her role

differently."¹² Britain only recently developed a formal counterinsurgency doctrine and still does not stress or encourage irregular warfare training for the "career officer."¹³ Mistakes have been repeated and lessons learned and re-learned. For example, the lesson of moving military headquarters to the district police headquarters was learned by the British in Palestine 1945, 12 years later in Malaya, and once again years later in Northern Ireland.¹⁴ Experience has been the primary, inadequate, teaching tool and its lessons have not been disseminated adequately.

"The government must give priority to defeating the political subversion (infrastructure), not the guerrilla".

Sir Robert Thompson

This is another reference to winning hearts and minds and to recognizing counterinsurgency involves much more than using force to eliminate the insurgent. Insurgencies are best countered by eliminating the causes or grievances, and gaining the support of the people away from the insurgent. The insurgent's political infrastructure is vital to survival, growth, and eventual success of the insurgency. Among the functions the infrastructure performs are collection and dissemination of intelligence; provision of supplies and financial resources; recruitment; establishment of a "legitimate" government as a rival to the established government and as a "conduit for support from friendly foreign powers" like the United States.¹⁵ Britain's declaration that the IRA is strictly a terrorist organization illuminates Britain's refusal to recognize the root of the problem, i.e., the insurgent's political cause and the strength it gains from support of the people.

Bloody Sunday, 30 January 1972, was an extreme, but not singular, example of British overreaction and targeting of the "insurgent" with military force instead of targeting the political cause with political force. The British army opened fire on and killed thirteen civil

rights demonstrators, including six teenagers. An independent inquiry by the British government found only two of the thirteen were "probably armed", and that the army's shooting "bordered on the reckless."¹⁶ The shooting of a man that same year when a car backfired further eroded British support while increasing support for the IRA.

The perception of British support for fanatical Unionists extremist groups has aided, not undermined, the IRA movement. In August 1969 when the IRA movement was very weak and disorganized, and the IRA battle for independence apparently shelved, there were Unionist attacks of Belfast nationalists during the annual celebration of the 1689-90 Protestant victories. The British mobilization of the largely Protestant Royal Ulster Constabulary (Northern Ireland police force) and completely Protestant Ulster Constabulary Force (reserve riot police) exacerbated the situation. Viewed by Catholics as extremely sectarian, these constabulary forces appeared to support the Unionist extremists.¹⁷ The televised slaughter of people and burning of over 500 mostly Catholic homes incited the dormant IRA movement leading to formation of the militant Provisional wing, and gained the IRA tremendous public and financial support.¹⁸ At the time, the British procedure appeared to be to apprehend and jail only IRA members and Nationalists, while ignoring the violent actions of the Unionists.¹⁹

However, some progress is being made in separating the people from the insurgent. Nearly impossible to accomplish an effective physical separation in an urban insurgency, the British are concentrating on other methods of regaining public support and assistance from the IRA. The controversial, poorly trained and equipped Protestant dominated Ulster Special Constabulary which were used on riot duty primarily against Catholics were disbanded and replaced by a bisectarian volunteer force. The British "Way Ahead Policy" transfers arrests and questioning duties from the soldier to the police. Police training is placing emphasis on the development of community relations and other psychological skills. The soldier's tour in Northern Ireland has been extended to 18 months to enable and encourage him to get to know the population on a more intimate level. These and other measures are essential to gaining

popular support for the government, but they are not enough to completely separate the insurgent from the people.

"A government must secure its base area before mounting a military campaign in the interior".

Sir Robert Thompson

This military aspect of Thompson's five principles is a British strength. The British soldier has become very much a part of Northern Ireland and its border with the Republic of Ireland. The British Army has been deployed to Northern Ireland since August 1969, when the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) proved unable to control local rioting. Army numbers peaked at about 22,000 at the height of the conflict in 1972.²⁰ Today's Army force numbers about 10,000, and supports about twice that many police.²¹ Contingency forces can be deployed to Northern Ireland at a moment's notice, as has been done many times in the past when violence escalated. However, the IRA continues to demonstrate the ability to cross the border almost at will, and attacks have been made on police and army stations, indicating that the existence of "secure" base areas does not ensure complete control.²²

A secure base area is indispensable for taking advantage of a vulnerability common to urban insurgents - a restricted area of operations. The urban insurgent is restricted to a smaller area than an agrarian insurgent, and must hide within the population. The IRA is bound not only by the city, but also by the sea surrounding the island, and to some extent the border between Ulster and the Irish Republic. Pressure on an insurgent over long periods from the government and its police and military can create tremendous psychological stress and cause attrition and mistakes.²³

The British Army organization is formal, efficient, and provides for unity of effort. A single Commander Land Forces major general commands the Army forces, and reports to the

General Officer Commanding (GOC). The GOC is the unified commander, in charge of Royal Air Force and Navy detachments, as well as Army, and responsible for high level coordination with the police and ministers.²⁴ Permanent bases and supporting infrastructure can be found throughout Northern Ireland. Unlike the United States in Vietnam, the British military are there for the long haul. Sir Thompson observed that the Americans in Vietnam "stayed for one year twenty times."²⁵

OPERATIONAL ART

Great Britain's practice of operational art needs improvement. Not surprisingly, given her colonialist history, British counterinsurgency efforts fare least well in the political arena. Her counterinsurgency campaign plan successfully translates strategy into operations and tactical action, but fails to recognize the primacy of politics and supporting role of the military. In other words, Great Britain's emphasis is on planning, sequencing, coordinating, and sustaining the wrong kinds of operations. Great Britain's conventional military operations are inappropriate in unconventional warfare. Mobilizing more troops, applying more force, and removing more human rights is not the answer. A coordinated campaign which includes a measured balance of all instruments of power is required. As they did when fighting to retain colonial rule in South Africa during the Boer guerilla struggle, the British are still fighting the wrong kind of war.

Great Britain also does a poor job of applying the principles of war. The British have been unable to: seize, retain and exploit the initiative (offensive); concentrate combat power at the decisive place and time (mass); put the enemy at a disadvantage through flexible application of power and match strength to weakness (maneuver); and prevent the enemy from acquiring an unexpected advantage (security). They rarely strike the enemy at a time, place or manner for

which he is unprepared (surprise), and most importantly, the British do not appear to have a clear and decisive objective.

Britain is also massing her efforts against the wrong center of gravity. Targeting the IRA guerrilla has distracted Great Britain from the true center of gravity - the people. The British continue to address the symptoms, the IRA, but not the root causes of the conflict. The grievances of the populace must be mitigated or eliminated, and the hearts and minds of the people must be gained by the government. But that is far easier said than done.

CHAPTER V

PRINCIPLES OF COUNTERINSURGENCY IN A DEMOCRACY

"The country is gone mad...an' its all for the glory o'God an' the honor o'Ireland" ¹

The conflict in Northern Ireland illustrates the difficulty a government can have in countering insurgency in a democratic society. Severe measures, like the use of excessive military force and even temporary suspension of liberties and legal rights, are part of daily life and less likely to cause an outcry by those who live in a less permissive and less free society. Experience has shown that governments most efficient in suppressing insurgents, particularly those who use terrorism, are police-states.² In a democracy, the extreme military and legal measures used by oppressive governments like the police-state are not likely to achieve success without an inordinate political cost to the government and the people. Care must be taken to ensure the populace is not alienated and perhaps pushed to support the insurgents by counterinsurgency actions.

Great Britain's greatest error may have been to conduct counterinsurgency operations based on many years of colonial experience outside of Ireland and Britain. Insurgencies in a democracy cannot be successfully countered in the same manner as in India, Malaya or sub-Saharan Africa.

The unique nature of insurgencies should not detract from what can be learned from this single insurgency. All insurgencies have general characteristics in common and tend to follow similar patterns. Britain's experiences in Northern Ireland have provided or reinforced the following general lessons, concepts and theories in the form of principles that can be applied to counterinsurgency at the operational level.

THOMPSON'S FIVE PRINCIPLES³

Perhaps the most important and applicable to counterinsurgency in a democracy are Sir Robert Thompson's Five Principles just discussed. Britain has shown that failure to follow these principles can lead to expenditure of billions of dollars and thousands of lives with little, if any, positive results. These essential principles can be reviewed by referring to chapter IV.

CENTER OF GRAVITY

In contrast to conventional warfare, "both antagonists have the same Clausewitzian Center of Gravity, that is, the same hub of power and the same factor upon which everything ultimately depends."⁴ To the insurgent, the people are its political arm, intelligence source, sanctuary, military manpower and logistical support. Similarly, loyalty and commitment of the people are the foundation of power for the government. "No government can survive without the acquiescence of the people -- least of all one actively opposed by an attractive and aggressive insurgent movement."⁵ The British emphasis on countering the insurgent rather than on the sources of the problem indicate a failure to recognize the true Center of Gravity and the high degree to which the government relies on its supporters. In contrast, the IRA demonstrate a clear understanding of the importance of the people: "Taken together, the people and the IRA are invincible. Apart, they can be defeated -- and then God help us."⁶ Both antagonists are competing for support from the same group of people; the one who recognizes and best concentrates his efforts on the people will have the advantage.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

A government must at all times portray the image that progress against the insurgents is being made, and that it is acting in the best interests of the populace.⁷ A government cannot win by propaganda, but it can lose by it. In contrast, insurgent propaganda can greatly strengthen the political infrastructure and popular support that can lead to insurgent victory. Perception is not everything, but the image a government presents plays a key role in counterinsurgency. The government needs the political strength derived from the support of public opinion.

The image that progress is being made is difficult to portray in a war with no clearly defined front. Unlike conventional war, "there is no clear-cut march to victory that can be easily and simply displayed on maps for newspaper readers and television viewers."⁸ Democracies are noted for their impatience in war. Vietnam showed that without clear progress in a protracted war, critical public support can decline dramatically. By nature, insurgencies are protracted. And democracies, by nature, are impatient with protracted warfare. A government must develop an active propaganda campaign which portrays the government's efforts and progress in the best light possible (without misrepresentation) and restricts insurgent access to the media.

The "face" presented by the Government can gain public support, or swing support to the insurgent. Britain's handling of events following the Bloody Sunday incident was so poor that negative public opinion forced the government to take measures it probably would have, and most definitely should have, avoided. For instance, disapproval by the public was a major factor in the British Government's poor decision to take over governmental control from Northern Ireland's Stormont Government. Britain's direct rule led to greater public dissatisfaction. The public viewed Britain's presence as an intrusion and further evidence of her determination to keep Northern Ireland under her "thumb."⁹

Insurgent propaganda is best countered before it is released. The timely release of well documented information of incidents involving insurgent or counterinsurgent can effectively counter rumors as well as the counterinsurgent propaganda which inevitably follows.

Insurgents use events to focus world attention on their cause. The media are quick to cooperate. The British instituted the "D-Notice" system to protect against media cooperation with the IRA.¹⁰ The government is notified by the media prior to publication when a particular news item would violate security laws, and in turn the government provides information for publication. The "D-Notice" system falls under criticism for restriction of the right of expression and the public's right to know, but it appears to have been effective in neutralizing much of the insurgent's propaganda and improving government image.

FORCE

Conventional warfare and massive firepower are counter productive in counterinsurgency operations. Force should be applied only when necessary, and in a highly selective manner.

Counterinsurgency is unconventional warfare, and conventional methods are generally counterproductive. Political primacy is a counterinsurgency imperative, but the use of force is often unavoidable. The key is selective application of the minimum amount of force.

The negative impact of the improper use of force by Britain's soldiers and police has been dramatic. From "Bloody Sunday" to single incidents of rough handling of suspects have turned public support away from the British government. Democracies expect and demand fair treatment of everyone, even terrorists.

Clear procedures and Rules of Engagement (ROE) for the police and military are a necessity. Additionally, those who fail to follow procedures and rules must be punished, and the population fully informed of the punishment. Recognition of the need for self-restraint and

fair play when combatting insurgents in a war for the hearts and minds of the people must be demonstrated by charging and bringing to trial police and military when excessive force is used. Public pronouncements of government efforts to ensure minimum levels of force are being used will aid the government's public relations campaign.

The British have helped keep incidents like Bloody Sunday to a minimum by issuing to the military and police a card that outlines in simple terms the circumstances and methods under which they can use their baton or firearm.¹¹ These ROE should also be made public, so the public and insurgent will know the requirements and restrictions placed on the military and police. Publication also serves to notify those who confront the military and police the repercussions of their actions. Training is also required to enable self-control and strict discipline in the face of great provocation. Without discipline and selective use of force, security forces have little chance of winning the loyalty of a population threatened by subversion.

The root of the problem in Ireland is the extent to which violence is used to counter violence posed by the IRA. The government response must preserve or restore the kind of order upon which the informal and formal British democratic constitutional system rests.¹²

JOINT COMMAND/FUSION CENTER

A joint intelligence and operations command must be established as a foundation to civil-military cooperation and a unified effort. Centralized command and decentralized execution are essential in counterinsurgency.

A master plan must be developed to unite the efforts of civil, military and police authorities. The master plan should be coordinated from a single "Fusion", or Joint Command Center which is responsible for gathering, processing and disseminating intelligence information from all sources and controlling operations for taking action on the intelligence.

The fusion center would be responsible for execution of Thompson's "overall plan in which political, social, economic and military responses are carefully laid down."¹³ The center should be staffed with a well trained and totally integrated team of civilian, police and military advisers and forces. Recognizing that the political branch of the government must determine the goals and the instruments of power used to meet those goals, the fusion center should be directed by a civilian.¹⁴

The British discovered early that a successful intelligence network is a vital link in counterinsurgency. Unfortunately, it was not until the late eighties that a central fusion center was established in Northern Ireland. Lack of coordinated intelligence among civilians, police and military proved highly detrimental. As Sun Tzu wrote, "Know the enemy and know yourself; in a hundred battles you will never be in peril."¹⁵

Human intelligence (HUMINT) is the best source of accurate and timely information. The gathering of HUMINT is difficult even from those who support the government's counterinsurgency efforts. Providing information about the IRA is extremely risky in the tight-knit Catholic communities. "Declaring oneself as a 'tout' invites assassination by the IRA and ensures the enmity of almost everybody one has grown up with and known. It also brings scorn and danger on the heads of relatives."¹⁶ In the ten years between 1977 and 1987, the IRA killed at least twenty-four Catholics suspected of being informers.¹⁷

Constant patrols, by foot or vehicles is a fairly effective method of obtaining information. British troops are responsible for getting to know every inch of their area, including the local inhabitants. Longer tours have enhanced the soldiers intelligence gathering capabilities in Northern Ireland. Familiarity enables the foot soldier to recognize immediately any change in the usage of buildings or the general pattern of life. But getting information from even a willing informant is made more difficult by the IRA's severe punishment of suspected "touts".

A method of encouraging the populace to cooperate is required. One method is a regular census of all citizens. Mandating attendance to a personal and private interview would

provide an opportunity for citizens, who because of fear of the insurgent, have not cooperated in the past.¹⁸ Interrogation during house searches is another method used by the British with some success. Neither mandatory interviews or house searches is popular with the populace, and if handled improperly can do more harm than good.

Obtaining information from within insurgent ranks is even more difficult. Monetary rewards, blackmail, and torture are three effective and often used methods of gaining human intelligence. Each has negative moral and legal aspects that must be dealt with, especially in a democratic society. The futility of bringing in outside interrogators was revealed in Northern Ireland.¹⁹ The locals were extremely uncooperative with investigators from outside of Ulster. Interrogators, whatever methods and means they used to obtain information, must be from the same social and cultural environment as the informer/suspect. The most useable and useful information will be gained from informal, low-level questioning, in a non-threatening environment by the interrogator who shares many qualities and experiences with his subject.

EMERGENCY LEGISLATION AND POWERS

Extra-legal practices are a two edged sword when conducting operations against insurgents. Repressive methods can create more practical difficulties than they solve.²⁰

Emergency legislation, or powers, should be introduced only if and when absolutely necessary. Once introduced, the temporary nature must be made very clear to the populace. To do otherwise will risk losing critical support of the populace to the insurgent.

Invocation of emergency powers can be interpreted as a sign that the insurgent, even if only temporarily, is winning. Insurgents use terrorism to make it impossible for a government to maintain order without resorting to some form of repression. Anti-terrorism courts, curfews, arrest without warrant, assembly prohibition, detention without trial, and house searches without warrants are examples of emergency powers invoked by the British in

Northern Ireland. All have been effective in enabling the government to govern, but they have also served to alienate the population and provided fodder for IRA propaganda. With the exception of curfews, emergency powers were addressed in Chapter IV.

Used properly, curfews can be one of the most useful emergency powers, and one of the least offensive to the populace if used properly. An area under curfew can be controlled by a much smaller force of police and troops than would be the case if normal movement were permitted. It helps to isolate the insurgent from the populace, and enables easier identification of terrorists or rioters. But there are severe disadvantages to a curfew. Total curfews cannot be maintained for more than 36 hours without great risk to the population who may be without food or need health care.²¹ Longer curfews prevent the population from earning a living and effectively freeze the economy of the city. Curfews are effective in the short term, but they also may only be a minor nuisance and easily out-waited by the patient insurgent terrorist. While a useful tool for maintaining order in an emergency, curfews, like all emergency powers, should be invoked only when absolutely necessary.²²

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

After twenty-three years of active counterinsurgency against the IRA, the British can point to no tangible proof that progress has been made in Northern Ireland. Over 3,000 people have died, and more deaths occur almost weekly. Only approximately 300 deaths have been members of the IRA.¹ The IRA continues to demonstrate that it can strike and make headlines almost at will. Great Britain's expenditure of six million dollars per day, and 30,000 troops and police have done little to resolve the Irish conflict or to make Northern Ireland a safe place to live.

As shown, there are three primary reasons for Great Britain's failure to eliminate the insurgent IRA. One is the complexity and nature of the Irish Conflict's origins which span hundreds of years and are influenced by many factors - religion, nationalistic differences, the desire for independence from foreign rule, and the desire for retention and cultivation of Irish culture and language. Another is the exceptional political and military capabilities of the IRA. And last, is Great Britain's inadequate system and methods for countering the IRA insurgency.

Little can be done to change the Irish Conflict's origin. The entangled issues and grievances of more than 400 years frustrate attempts at resolution. But if understood, the origins and setting can assist the counterinsurgent in developing a solution. Using the Irish Conflict as a case study, this paper identified the operational focus that must be possessed by a democratic government and the military operational commander in countering and dealing with urban insurgency in a democracy.

The proposed framework for analyzing an insurgency indicates the IRA has military and political strength, and potential for success. The IRA recognizes it is fighting a political battle for the support of the populace, and it concentrates its mass and efforts to gain that

support. Another IRA strength is its extraordinary psychological and informational powers. IRA objectives are clear and unambiguous, and their stated operational level goals have been attained. Surprise, security, and maneuver are three principles of war applied exceptionally well by the IRA. IRA organization and support are strong, and with one very important categorical exception, strategy is supported by tactics and operations. This exception, indiscriminate terror and bombing, is the vulnerability that may cause the IRA to lose their lifeline of public support .

The proposed framework for analyzing the counterinsurgent indicates weaknesses in Great Britain's approach to the Irish Conflict. The British objective in Northern Ireland is unclear, which has hindered the development of supporting strategy and tactics. Great Britain does not appear to recognize the IRA for what it is - an urban insurgent organization. The British are therefore applying conventional methods of warfare in an unconventional conflict. Force, both military and legislative, has undermined the loyalty and commitment of the people that are the foundation of power for Great Britain. The British have also failed to recognize and act upon the IRA's source of strength - its political infrastructure. This Center of Gravity must be attacked by addressing the grievances of the people. Britain's dependence on military and para-military force underline a lack of recognition of the primacy of politics and supporting role of the military in counterinsurgency operations.

There is no easy solution to the Irish Conflict. However, Northern Ireland does not have to be Great Britain's Vietnam.

Great Britain has what it takes to succeed against the IRA - skilled politicians and military, economic strength, and the apparent ability to use these assets to whatever degree is necessary. But having the tools is only part of the battle; the British must learn to use them properly. Great Britain must first recognize it is fighting an unconventional war. The British then must understand that successful counterinsurgency harmonizes all five instruments of power - political, economic, psychological, diplomatic and military, as well as the efforts of civilian, police and military. "While there is no purely military solution to such a problem,

there is equally no purely political or purely economical or purely propaganda solution."² The British must follow Sir Robert Thompson's five principles of counterinsurgency when applying these instruments of power.

With the end of the Cold War and the growth of democracy, the United States faces increased responsibilities and potential for urban counterinsurgency operations in democratic countries. To be successful, governments must have the proper focus for success. This focus is one which harmonizes all five instruments of power - political, economic, psychological, diplomatic and military, as well as the efforts of civilians, police and military.

General George Washington said it best: "To be prepared for war is one of the most effective means of preserving the peace."³ The government and military operational commander who prepare themselves by following the recommendations of this paper will prevent a devastating, protracted conflict like that in Northern Ireland.

NOTES

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⁵ Dennis M. Drew, Insurgency and Counterinsurgency: American Military Dilemmas and Doctrinal Proposals, Cadre Paper (Air University, Maxwell AFB, AL, 1988), p. 6.

⁶ O'Neill, Bard E., Heaton, William R., and Alberts, Donald J., ed., Insurgency in the Modern World (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1980), p. 46.

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⁴ Provisional I.R.A., Freedom Struggle, n.p., p. 89

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⁷ Ibid.

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¹⁰ Hull, p. 33.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 34.

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¹³ Ibid., p. 50.

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¹⁵ Ibid., p. 51.

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² John D. Waghelstein, "Understanding Low Intensity Conflict," Lecture, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI: 13 January 1993.

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⁴ John D. Waghelstein, "Understanding Low Intensity Conflict,"; U.S. Army and Air Force, FM 100-20, AFP 3-20, Military Operations in LIC, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, December 1990), ch. 2; Naval War College, Guide to the Analysis of Insurgency, NWC 2228, Naval War College, Newport, RI, 1993.

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⁶ Ibid. p. 20.

⁷ O'Neill, Bard E., Heaton, William R., and Alberts, Donald J., ed., Insurgency in the Modern World (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1980), p. 11.

⁸ Clarity.

⁹ Colin. Beer, "Impressions From Ulster," The Army Quarterly, (London: William Clowes & Sons, Limited), Volume 102:365-369, April 1972; O'Neill, p. 61.

¹⁰ U.S. Army and Air Force, FM 100-20, p. 2-4.

¹¹ Mao Tse-Tung, Selected Military Writings of Mao Tse-Tung, (Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1967), p. 260.

¹² U.S. Army and Air Force, CLIC PAPERS: Low Intensity Conflict Overview, Definitions, and Policy Concerns, (Langley Air Force Base, VA: Army-Air Force Center for Low Intensity Conflict, June 1989), p. 18.

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¹⁵ Dennis M. Drew, Insurgency and Counterinsurgency: American Military Dilemmas and Doctrinal Proposals, Cadre Paper (Air University, Maxwell AFB, AL, 1988), p. 11.

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